

Corpus-Based Analysis on the Translatability of Conceptual Vagueness in Traditional Chinese Medicine Classics Huang Di Nei Jing

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Abstract : Huang Di Nei Jing (HDNJ) is one of the significant traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) classics which lays the foundation of TCM theory and practice. It is an important work for the world to study the ancient civilizations and medical history of China. Language in HDNJ is highly concise and vague, and notably challenging to translate. This paper investigates the translatability of one particular vagueness in HDNJ: the conceptual vagueness which carries the Chinese philosophical and cultural connotations. The corpora tool Sketch Engine is used to provide potential online contexts and word behaviors. Selected two English translations of HDNJ by TCM practitioner and non-practitioner are used to examine frequency and distribution of linguistic features of the translation. It was found the hypothesis about the universals of translated language (explicitation, normalisation) is true in one translation, but it is on the sacrifice of some original contextual connotations. Transliteration is purposefully used in the second translation to retain the original flavor, which is argued as a violation of the principle of relevance in communication because it yields little contextual effects and demands more processing effort of the reader. The translatability of conceptual vagueness in HDNJ is constrained by source language context and the reader's cognitive environment.

Keywords : corpus-based translation, translatability, TCM classics, vague language

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